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ABSTRACT

The Palestinian Jewish educational system grew out of urban schools established in the 1800s through the philanthropic efforts of the European Jewish communities and out of rural schools established at Kibbutzim from the turn of the century. Standards were set first by a Teachers' Association, then by the worldwide Zionist Organization, and finally by the National Council of the Palestinian Jewish community. Financial support came from both Palestinian and international Jewish sources, and to a minor extent from the British administration. Public elementary schools reflected the three major political trends: conservative religious (25% of pupils in 1947), leftist labor (25%), and centrist (50%). Israeli statehood brought compulsory education (1949) and centralized administration. The political basis of school types was prohibited in 1953 and replaced by a system of religious and nonreligious state schools. The major problem currently facing Israeli education is that the many cultural groups forming Israel's population, basically divisible into Western and Oriental Jewish groups, have created difficulties in achieving educational and social equality and integration. Indications are that remedial efforts will continue to modify Israel's educational system. (Author/PGD)

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THE EVOLUTION OF THE MODERN JEWISH SCHOOL SYSTEM IN ISRAEL

Shoshana Ben-Tsvi Mayer

WORLD EDUCATION MONOGRAPH SERIES
Number One

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Preface

This monograph, "The Evolution of the Modern Jewish School System in Israel" was originally written as the third chapter of a doctoral dissertation entitled, "The Attitudes of Israeli Teachers and Students toward the Two Sexes and their Sexually Stereotyped Behaviors".[1] The author is Dr. Shoshana Ben-Tsvi Mayer, an Israeli citizen, who is now Assistant Professor of Education at Haifa University.

Dr. Mayer's essay inaugurates a new "World Education Monograph Series" of the World Education Project, School of Education, The University of Connecticut. It is planned to issue four monographs in this series during each calendar year.

Comments and suggestions regarding this monograph series or other activities of the World Education Project are invited.

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[1] Shoshana Ben-Tsvi Mayer THE ATTITUDES OF ISRAELI TEACHERS AND STUDENTS TOWARD THE TWO SEXES AND THEIR SEXUALLT STEREOTYPED BEHAVIORS. Storrs, Ct.: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, School of Education, The University of Connecticut, 1976.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MODERN JEWISH SCHOOL SYSTEM IN ISRAEL

The independence of Israel was declared on May 15, 1948, the day of the termination of the British mandate on Palestine (1922-1948). At that time close to two milleniums had passed since the last period of Jewish sovereignty and the Holy Land had known many rulers. Under similar circumstances, many newly emerging states have been faced with the task of remaking a colonial-type educational system, which was characterized by serving a preponderance of the interests of the country in authority. Often, the schools which the new nation inherited were geared to disseminating a culture alien to the local tradition and aspiration. For historic reasons, different conditions evolved in Palestine, resulting in the early emergence of an autonomous Jewish public educational system there, with Hebrew as the medium of instruction. By 1948 it contained the full range of formal education, from nursery schools through primary and post-primary schools up through institutions of higher learning. In the following paragraphs this development will be described.

Early Endeavors - Before Statehood

By tradition, schooling among the Old Yishuv[1] in Palestine followed the pattern of Jewish communities in other parts of the world comprising,

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1 Yishuv (literally a settlement) is the Jewish community in Palestine, especially prior to statehood. Old Yishuv refers to the Jewish community in Palestine prior to the Zionist movement, especially prior to the twentieth century.

for children, the Heder in the Ashkenazi[2] and the Kuttab in the Sephardi(c)[3] sectors. Both of these basic programs were followed up with the Yeshiva for adolescents and adults. The exclusive subject matter taught in these schools was of Judaic content. Their language of communication was colloquial Yiddish in the Heder, and Ladino or Arabic in the Kuttab.

The beginnings of modern Jewish education in Palestine can be traced back to two main sources:

1. Philanthropical endeavors of European Jewish organizations who, in the nineteenth century and at the beginning of this one, established and maintained a large number of schools. These schools were set up in towns, and strongly reflected the culture and language of the sponsors' country of origin.

2. A steadily growing network of small rural Hebrew schools, maintained by Zionist organizations and local enterprises. In these schools pioneering Hebrew teachers imbued their students with a strong national spirit.

Private philanthropy established the first school of a discernibly modern character, the Laemmel School in Jerusalem, which was founded by Austrian sponsors in 1856. The Alliance Universelle Israelite in France founded, in 1870, the agricultural school Mikweh Israel, the first of a large number of Alliance schools. They were attended mostly by the Sephardic community. The Anglo-Jewish Association in London took over a school for girls in Jerusalem in 1891, the Evelina de Rothschild school[4].

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2 Ashkenazi: Most Jews of European origin who observe the rites customary in the German synagogues.

3 Sephardi(c): Most Jews of African and Asian origin who observe the rites customary in the Spanish synagogues.

4 J.S. Bentwich. HA-HINUKH BI-MEDINAT YISSRAEL. (Education in the State of Israel). Tel Aviv, Tchetchik, 1960. p. 11-13.

Of special importance and instrumental value was the school network of the "Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden" of Berlin, called "Ezra" in Hebrew, who at the beginning of the century set up or took over an extensive range of schools, among them kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools, a Rabbinical school and a teacher training college; the first of its kind. The Ezra schools introduced into Palestine the prevailing modern German pedagogic thought, including the ideas for reforming instruction of Fredrich Froebel and Georg Kirschensteiner. Before World War I Palestine was still under Ottoman rule and thousands of Jewish students attended the Hilfsverein schools. The same organization contemplated setting up a technical higher institution, with a "Real-schule" attached and preparatory to it.

The Hilfsverein schools stood out among the other philanthropic organizations, for although their policy was partly subject to German imperialistic interests, and German was cultivated in their curricula, they allowed for Zionistic aspirations. Hebrew as a medium of instruction was dominant in these schools. These attributes, together with the relatively high pedagogic standards, singled out the Hilfsverein-Ezra schools as a laboratory for modern Jewish national education.[5]

In an additional and unintended way the Hilfsverein also became instrumental in the full Hebraization of the Jewish schools. Upon the erection of the Technical College in 1913, financed by various Jewish and Hilfsverein sources, the latters' insistence on teaching the natural and technical subjects in German became publicized. The new Yishuv reacted

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5 Moshe Rinott. HEVRAT HA-EZRA LI-YEHUDEI GERMANIA BI-YETSIRA UVE-MAAVAK. ("Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden"--Creation and Struggle). Jerusalem: The School of Education of the Hebrew University, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the University of Haifa and the Leo Baeck Institute, 1972.

strongly, and the controversy, known as "the war of languages"[6], embraced the greater part of the population. A wholly Hebrew education, national in spirit as well as in language, was demanded and rapidly implemented in newly opened Hebrew town schools, staffed by teachers who, together with their students, demonstrated their preference by leaving the Hilfsverein schools.

The "war of languages" marked the beginning of the united Hebrew school system. Strongly influential in its shaping was the Teachers' Association, founded in 1903, which prior to World War I acted as the central authority of Hebrew education.[7] Far from serving as an organization for the advancement of its members only, the Teachers' Assocation was dedicated to the national renaissance as expressed in Zionism, and aimed to create a school system promoting the collective ideals of the emerging Jewish autonomous society. To this end Hebrew was considered a vehicle of the utmost importance, and the community of teachers, by constantly creating and improving a new terminology, took upon itself the historic task of rendering modern science learnable in Biblical Hebrew.[8]

The Teachers' Association also issued a curriculum for the prevailing European-style elementary phase of eight grades in 1919, and administered qualifying examinations for teachers. It became the acknowledged pedagogical authority of both policy-making and inspection in all Hebrew schools.[9]

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6 Aharon F. Kleinberger. SOCIETY, SCHOOL AND PROGRESS IN ISRAEL. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1969. p. 32.

7 Joseph Bentwich, EDUCATION IN ISRAEL. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965. p. 12-15.

8 Barukh Ben-Yehuda. "Le-toldot ha-Hinukh be-Erets Yissrael ad Kum ha-Medina" (To the History of Education in Palestine Until the Emergence of the State). HA-HINUKH BE-YISSRAEL (Education in Israel). Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1973, p. 31-33.

9 Bentwich, EDUCATION. p. 23-26.

In the meantime, in the pioneering villages and Kevutzot[10] a string of Hebrew schools was established, most of them on a pre-secondary level. A small number of all-Hebrew schools had already existed in the towns, but the most notable events of urban Hebrew education were the founding of the Herzliya Gymnasium at Jaffa, in 1906, the Hebrew Gymnasium at Jerusalem, in 1910, and the Hareali School at Haifa, in 1913. A teacher-training seminary for women was established at Jaffa in 1913.[11]

The beginnings of centralized administration. In the years 1913-1933 all Hebrew schools came first under the management of the Education Council and later under the direction of the Education Department of the world-wide Zionist Organization. During the following years, up to statehood in 1948, the responsibility for education was assumed by the National Council (Vaad Leumi), the executive organ of the self-governing Jewish community in Palestine.[12] Although a voluntary establishment, the National Council acted as a Ministry on behalf of 95 percent of the Yishuv and conducted their internal affairs. The remaining 5 per cent consisted of ultra-orthodox anti-Zionist circles.[13] In 1927 the National Council was recognized by the British Mandatory Government and received limited power to levy compulsory taxation from its members. Among other services some of these taxes were used for the purpose of education.[14] The

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10 Kevutzot, or Kibbutzim (singular, Kevutzah or Kibbutz) are communal rural settlements. See Chapter II, n. 48.

11 Moshe Avidor, EDUCATION IN ISRAEL. Jerusalem: Youth and Halutz Department of the Zionist Organization, 1957. p. 19.

12 Avraham Arnon, "Toldot ha-Hinukh ha-Ivri he-Hadash" (History of the New Hebrew Education). HA-ENTSIKLOPEDIA HA-IVRIT. (Encyclopaedia Hebraica.) Jerusalem: Company of Encyclopaediae Publishing, 1957. Vol. VI. p. 989-990.

13 Kleinberger, SOCIETY, p. 20.

14 Ibid.

British themselves did not provide either compulsory or universal education in mandatory Palestine.[15]

Financially, three factors contributed to the upkeep of Jewish public education in the years of the National Council. These were the Yishuv itself, the authorized representative of world Jewry, The Jewish Agency and the British administration. The British calculated their contribution toward Arab and Jewish education according to the ratio of school-age children in the two communities and irrespective of actual school attendance. This government allocation was insufficient to meet the demand for schooling in either community.[16] As a result, the Mandatory Grant for the Jewish system did not exceed, at its peak in 1944-5, 8.5 per cent of the actual expenditure.[17] The rest was raised by the other two parties. Of these two, in 1919 the Jewish Agency provided almost 90 per cent of the budget, but the fast growing Yishuv gradually took over the financial burden. By 1947, on the eve of independence, it was able to cover 80 per cent of the educational expenses.[18] Notwithstanding, the whole pre-state period was marked by heavy financial problems with the result that the Yishuv could maintain only an eight-year public elementary school-system. Secondary education remained in the hands of independent organizations and private undertakings. A small number of private elementary schools had also emerged.[19]

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15 PALESTINE ROYAL COMMISSION, MEMORANDA PREPARED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF PALESTINE. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1937. p. 118.

16 THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN PALESTINE. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1946. p. 52, 54-55.

17 Ibid., p. 49.

18 Arnon, TOLDOT. p. 990.

19 Kleinberger, SOCIETY. p. 33-34.

The eight-year Jewish public elementary schooling became the universal pattern, including 90 per cent of all children in the six to fourteen year old age group. Pre-school education, maintained largely by womens' organizations, was widely implemented. In 1945, 80 per cent of all first graders were kindergarten graduates. Secondary education was heavily on the academic side, and entrance to the greatest part of it was selective. The constant financial stress on Palestinian Jewish education did not foster the establishment of vocational secondary schooling because it was very expensive in nature. Only a small number of such schools operated prior to statehood; erected and maintained by Jewish organizations abroad.[20]

Along with the country-wide pattern of elementary schooling up to the age of fourteen and selective secondary school attendance thereafter, a separate system prevailed in the rural communal Kibbutz settlements. In them education was universally provided up to the age of 18.[21] In 1947, 7 per cent of the population comprised the Kibbutz movement.[22] Youth-villages of the Youth-aliya, the organization set up to rescue children from the Nazi regime in Europe, also maintained vocational-agricultural continuation classes for adolescents.[23] The Talmudic academies for the youth of the ultra-orthodox remained strongholds of a unique, ancient form of Jewish education.

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20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Dan Leon. THE KIBBUTZ: A NEW WAY OF LIFE. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1969. p. 201. Since statehood this percentage has decreased to only 3 per cent in 1974 (FACTS ABOUT ISRAEL, Jerusalem: Ministry of Information, 1975. p. 74) due to the non-collectivist nature of the new immigration and to a general crisis regarding pioneer values expressed in the Kibbutz movement.

23 Bentwich, EDUCATION, p. 122-128.

The teacher training seminaries were maintained, parallel to the elementary school system, by the autonomous Jewish administration.[24] Many teachers of the secondary level were graduates of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.[25]

The pre-state Hebrew national schools were not only institutions of formal learning. They were, conceptually and in reality, the essence of national self-expression, in terms of cultivating new, futuristic ideals of a Jewish renaissance in the land of the Biblical forebears. The victory of Hebrew as the general language of instruction was regarded as an essential stage toward both a rediscovery of the original cultural roots of the nation, and the achivement of political sovereignty.

Most schools were imbued with a spirit of pioneering and inculcated in their students a strong and active interest in settling the land and defending it.[26] The school system supported the pioneering, political youth movements.[27] At times, eyes were closed even to upper secondary students' anti-British underground activities.[28]

The three trends. From the beginning, political Zionism contained various sub-ideologies, expressed in organized parties within the greater movement. These ideologies have continued as the chief components of the Israeli political scene. Beliefs ranged from the extremely socialistic labor parties through to ultra-religious and far-right, maximalist sections.

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25 THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION, p. 61.

26 Ibid., p. 5. See also Ben Yehuda, LE-TOLDOT, p. 18.

27 Yossef Ben David, "Tenuat ha-Noar". (The Youth-movement). HA-ENTSIKLOPEDIA HA-HINUKHIT. (Educational Encyclopedia) Edited by A.A. Simon, A.F. Kleinberger and A. Shohat. Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Bialik Institute, 1964. Vol. IV. p. 797.

28 Personal experience of the author.

The middle of the road was occupied by the General Zionists. All spheres of the Yishuv were highly politicized. The pluralistic character of Zionist ideologies struggling for prominence pervaded the educational system as well. A tripartite "trend-system" emerged, containing, until 1953, the Labor Trend, the General Trend and the Mizrahi (religious) Trend.[29]

All three trends were well represented in all boards and committees of the National Council and enjoyed far-reaching autonomy in shaping and implementing their ideological policies in the respective school trends. Each trend appointed its own teachers, principals and supervisors. Parents sent their children to schools which were in accord with their own political persuasions.

The Labor trend was devoted to the principles of the Zionist labor movement and in general cultivated agriculture and manual work. The sciences and social studies, along with crafts, dominated the curriculum. Jewish studies made up only 30 per cent of it.

The national Mizrahi or religious trend aimed at teaching both the law (Torah) and secular studies. It intended to educate Jews who were both observant and at home in the modern world. Jewish studies comprised 60 per cent of the curriculum in these schools.

The General trend, largest of all before statehood, practiced the middle way. Its rationale was national, above-party unity. It permitted manifold educational enterprises within its fold. The ratio of Jewish studies in the General trend was 40 per cent.[30]

Nearly every school in the system, from kindergarten through elementary and continuation classes up to the seminaries for teachers, was

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29 Kleinberger, SOCIETY, p. 35, 123.

30 Arnon, TOLDOT, p. 992. See also Bentwich, EDUCATION, p. 24-26.

affiliated with one of the three trends. At the end of the British mandate in 1948, the division was as follows:[31]

Distribution of Pupils in Public Elementary Schools, by Trends, 1947/8

General-trend	50.1%
Mizrahi-trend	25.0%
Labor-trend	24.8%
No trend	0.1%
	100.0%

The Development of State Education

In 1948, the year of independence, the organized Jewish educational system consisted of kindergarten classes; an elementary school-system of eight grades for the six to fourteen year old age-group attended by almost all children and divided into three politically affiliated trends, and a small number of mostly selective private or semi-public secondary schools.[32]

The academic high schools led to maturity examinations that were similar to the German Abitur and the French baccalaureate, serving as the keys for admission to the higher institutions of learning.[33] Of those there were two: The Hebrew University and The Haifa Institute of Technology, both founded in 1920.[34]

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31 Bentwich, HA-HINUKH, p. 72.

32 Kleinberger, SOCIETY, p. 35, 36. See also Bentwich, EDUCATION, p. 30-31.

33 SYSTEM OF EDUCATION, p. 35.

34 Bentwich, EDUCATION, p. 26-27.

The beginnings of state legislation.[35] In 1949, less than one year after independence, the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) passed the Compulsory Education Law. This law provided for free and obligatory education for all children in the five to fourteen year old age-group, consisting of one Kindergarten year[36] and 8 years of primary schooling within the trend-system. Youngsters who had not completed their primary education became obliged to attend evening classes.

Financially, the responsibility for underwriting the compulsory stage of education lay, as it still does, with the State and the local authorities. The latter, as a rule, provide only for the physical plant and for the auxiliary personnel of the school. In every other respect, in enforcing the law, hiring and paying teachers, determining aspects of the curriculum and supervision, even to fully maintaining the schools including the buildings in the "development towns"[37], Israel has a centralized educational administration. Most educational matters rest with the Ministry of Education and Culture.[38] This centralized administration derives not only from the pre-state collectivistic tradition but also seems to be necessary in a rapidly growing state which took upon itself

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35 For more comprehensive account see Kleinberger, SOCIETY, Chapter 3, "Legislation and Politics of Education", p. 116-150, and Bentwich, EDUCATION, Chapter 4, "State Education - The Legal Basis", p. 33-44.

36 Kindergartens are not attached to schools. Children attend daily, between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. Private nurseries, catering to the ages 2½ - 3, are also widely attended.

37 "Development towns": Towns built by the government according to blueprints for scattering the population throughout the whole country. Preferential help is given to those willing to settle in development towns. New immigrants make up the bulk of the population.

38 Bentwich, EDUCATION, Chapter VI, "Administration and Finance." p. 52-59.

creating towns and carries out policies of populating areas according to planning. This is a very different situation from the reality in other, "normal" countries in which cities and villages had developed naturally, during centuries of successive development. Lacking any local and self-governing tradition, the population in the development localities of Israel depends on the national government for community services, including education.

State education law and abolishment of the trends. The years 1949-1951 were marked by a doubling of the 1948 population.[39] Two thirds of this increase was due to a mass immigration about half of which originated in underdeveloped Islamic countries of Asia and Africa.[40] This sudden growth strained the capacities of the school system causing a severe shortage of teachers and equipment to set in.[41] Furthermore, problems previously known only on a small scale arose regarding the accomodation of children who were alien to the Western standards of education that prevailed in Israel.[42]

In the political sphere, inter-trend competition to set up schools in the immigrant camps followed. Many immigrant parents, not knowledgeable in the intricacies of the Yishuv's politics, were manipulated into "choosing" trends. Bitter contentions between the parties ensued. The press and the public spoke out against the immorality of politically manipulating the immigrants. The issue brought about the resignation of the Government,

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39 In 1948 it had been 650,000. R. Baki, "Ha-Okhlossiya: Demografiya" (The Population: Demography). HA-ENTSIKLOPEDIA HA-IVRIT, p. 673.

40 Ibid. Calculated from p. 670.

41 Bentwich, EDUCATION, p. 37.

42 Kleinberger, SOCIETY, p. 48-49.

the dissolution of the Knesset and new elections.

In the new government both the Prime-Minister, Mr. David Ben-Gurion, and the Minister of Education, Mr. BenZion Dinur, expressed their well known opposition to the continuation of the trend-system. They believed that it was incompatible with the new conditions which demanded an effort toward rapid integration, instead of political bickering in the schools. Some intraparty splits and ideological developments also raised doubts about the value and viability of the trends. It became apparent that the distinctions between the trends, developed under pre-state conditions, had little significance when applied to the great number of newcomers of which the majority carried no political orientation whatsoever. Furthermore, in the rapidly set up new schools the two secular trends and the two religious trends (for after statehood the strongly orthodox Agudat Yisrael Party formed a fourth, very small trend) differed very little within themselves. Subsequently, in 1953 the State Education Law was passed by the Knesset. It modified the Compulsory Education Law, abolished the trends and prohibited all party or political propaganda in the educational institutions. All attachments to party or communal organizations ceased. The state became strengthened in its responsibility to provide education for all stages of compulsory schooling, in the spirit of the collective aims of society.[43] These aims were broadly stated in the State Education Law. State Education aims to base elementary education on

> . . . the values of Jewish culture and the achievements of science, on love of the homeland and loyalty to the State and the Jewish people, on practice in agricultural work and handicraft, on pioneer (halutzic) training,

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43 Kleinberger, SOCIETY, Chapter 3, "Legislation and Politics of Education", p. 116-150.

and on striving for a society built on freedom, equality, tolerance, mutual assistance and love of mankind. 44

State Education provides for two kinds of schooling. State Schools are non-religious in their content and population, and Religious State Schools are religious in teaching, the selection of teachers and supervisors. Both came to be administered by the Ministry of Education. As a third orientation, the independent or non-official schools of Agudat Yisrael, more religious and traditional than the State Religious Schools, have been recognized and became largely supported by the state. As before, provisions in the law are made for the continuation of other, non-official schools, called the "exemption" or "undefined" schools, made up largely of Talmudic institutions.[45]

All State Schools have a basic common curriculum, issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture, with space left for the Religious State Schools to implement their own additional program.

The breakdown of all State Schools, including the new Intermediate Section[46], for 1972/3 was as follows[47]:

State Schools	69.3%
Religious State Schools	25.2%
Independent (Agudat Yisrael) Schools	5.5%
	100.0%

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44 State Education Law, Section 2. BOOK OF LAW. Jerusalem: Government of Israel, 20.8.1953. As cited in Kleinberger, SOCIETY, p. 123.

45 Bentwich, EDUCATION, p. 39-40.

46 See in this Chapter, "The Educational Reform", p.106.

47 EDUCATIONAL STATISTICAL INFORMATION, 55 (in Hebrew), Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Education and Culture, October 1974, p. 7.

The importance of State Education (in Hebrew the term also indicates "sovereign education"), on the Israeli scene cannot be overrated. It is conceived as the foremost agent of unifying a nation that hails from a hundred countries and a Babel of languages. The aim is unifying but, at least in intention, not uniforming. It is also considered the key to social integration, an aspect that is dealt with in the next paragraphs.

The Problem of Socio-Economic Disparity in Education

Israel, formerly Palestine, is a country of immigrants. At independence, in 1948, its Jewish population was 650,000, two thirds of whom were immigrants.[48] The census for 1951 registered a population of 1,300,000; three-quarters of whom were immigrants.[49] In 1972 there were 2,723,600 Jews in Israel of whom 1,418,200, more than half of the population, were non-Israeli born.[50] Such statistical reports do not, however, convey the real demographic situation in Israel, one that can be labelled as the major problem of its social and educational reality.

Prior to statehood 90 per cent of the population were of European or other Western parentage. After independence more than half of the immigrants came from underdeveloped Islamic countries in Asia and North Africa.[51] Although in many cases the immigrants, Olim in Hebrew, came in large groups and in many cases whole Jewish communities were en masse

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48 Baki, "Demografiya", p. 670.

49 Ibid., p. 675.

50 EDUCATION AND CULTURE, 25, Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1974, p. 45.

51 Baki, "Demografiya", p. 669.

transported to Israel,[52] they did not, as a rule, bring along strong internal leaders among them. Moreover, many of the newcomers came directly from conditions of a general deterioration of their authentic ethnic and cultural values. Many more had experienced great poverty and marginal legal existence in their countries of origin, especially in the Islamic countries. Also characteristic for the large waves of the Aliyah[53] in the early fifties was their nature of mass-rescue during which the upper crust of the Jewish communities, the very rich and the professionals, often elected to stay or to immigrate elsewhere. Thus, although a small number of professionals and intelligentsia settled in Israel, for instance some from Iraq and from Egypt, the Moroccan Aliyah, for example, consisted overwhelmingly of people from the lower classes, who had lost their intellectuals to France.

The Aliyot from Islamic Asia and North Africa, henceforth called Oriental Jews, differed among themselves to a great extent. Still wider was the difference between the Western character of the absorbing society and their Oriental values and norms. The main differences were between Western rational thinking, scientific and technological orientation and planning, non-clannish social structure, personal achievement-mindedness and meritocracy, and the Oriental tendencies to maintain tradition, fatalism, kinship-solidarity, low esteem for future-planning, adherence to the familiar, strong beliefs in the magic and its manipulation, a weakness in differentiation between objective and subjective, poor intellectual abstraction and low ability to control impulses. Moreover, in the Oriental society status is often assigned by sex, age, ancestry and

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52 E.g. from Libya, Yemen, Iraq. Baki, "Demografiya", p. 667.

53 Aliyah (plural Aliyot): ascent, the Hebrew term of immigration to Israel. If a person emigrates from Israel, his action is called Yerida (descent). The person who immigrates is an Oleh (plural Olim); an emigrant is a Yored (plural Yordim).

inheritance; rather than individual attainment.[54] Many of the newcomers were illiterate[55] and lacked professional or even basic skills and occupations. They tended to have large families.[56]

Due to the differences in norms and culture, the Oriental Aliyah did not assimilate at a rate approaching that of the former, Western Aliyot. In spite of the egalitarian ideology of the Yishuv, half of Israel's population, the Oriental Jews, quickly filled the lowest social strata. Oriental Jews had no real representation in the skilled vocations, the Government and other decision-making groups. This situation confronted the Yishuv with two grave dangers. Society might be pulled toward an Oriental, almost pre-industrial, culture. Or, the ethnic division might lead to a polarization of society, to elitism, injustice and social conflict. In both cases the national and humanistic aspiration of Ingathering the Exiles, the term for bringing in and absorbing Jews from abroad, might terminate in the emergence of one more Middle Eastern Levantine country.

This problem of socio-economic and cultural gaps between the population strata is not new or particular to Israel. Blatant and rigid class differences have traditionally divided European societies. Social and racial inequalities are also a grave issue in the United States. There is evidence that similar problems are gaining ground in the Third World as well. However, several features make the need to close the social gap uniquely significant in Israel.

First, contrary to the societies mentioned above, in Israel there is no historical tradition or in-grained mentality of racial and social

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54 Kleinberger, SOCIETY, p. 56-57.

55 Baki, "Demografiya", p. 679.

56 Ibid., p. 697.

inequalities. Although there had always existed a small segment of the poor and the slum dwellers, the new reality of the massive proportions and socio-ethnic nature of a disadvantaged stratum took the highly democratic and egalitarian Yishuv by surprise. Even today, in the full face of the persistence of wide differences in the socio-cultural attainments of Western and Oriental Jews, the idea of class differences has not been accepted or internalized. There is still a strong adherence to the old belief that full equality does exist in Israel.

Second, along with the grave humane and social justice aspects of the problem, a proportional decrease in trained manpower and the general cultural and scientific level might be potentially dangerous for a country surrounded by self-declared enemies. Israel's foremost means of self defence is her continued superiority in knowledge, skills, and morale. Third, there is a genuine realistic and ideological urgency for speedy and full integration of all Jewish social groups and individuals. This includes Ashkenazi, Sephardic and Oriental "mixed" marriages, to bring about a renewed unity of the nation.

Opening up avenues for upward mobility, especially in the educational sphere, was recognized as the foremost remedy of the situation. The home, with its shaping forces of tradition and norms, was only in part reachable through community services. Therefore, the efforts have been focused on formal education, well in the sphere of the central authorities' influence. Three phases can be discerned in educational thought and practice regarding giving special attention to the problem of socio-economic and cultural deprivation.

Phase I The policy of formal equality. Based on previous integration experiences before statehood, in the first decade of independence

formal equality in the access to education was practiced. Nine years of education were made legally compulsory for all children, with equal time, identical curricula and supplementary activities extended to all children, regardless of their home environment. It was assumed that, as had been the case earlier when there were smaller numbers of immigrant children, equal treatment would eventually result in the assimilation of the Oriental Jews to the normative Western standards of the Yishuv. Any proposition to deviate from the uniform practice was regarded as jeopardizing equality and cutting off the Oriental children from the mainstream of culture.[57]

Phase II Research findings. Toward the end of the decade of formal equality it became evident that instead of making rapid progress, the initially deprived students had developed cumulative retardation and failure. Along with public experience and voiced opinion, a series of educational research projects and statistical surveys brought to light the futility of the "equal treatment" policy. They suggested other measures to alleviate the situation.[58]

Research pointed to the amount and nature of retardation, starting well before school age, not due to heredity but to intellectually unstimulating patterns of child rearing.[59] The resulting condition, called after

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57 Moshe Smilansky, "Hitmodelut Maarekhet ha-Hinukh im Baayoteihem shel Yeladim Teunei Tipuah". (Struggle of the Educational System with the Problems of Deprived Children). HA-ḤINUKH BIMEDINAT YISRAEL, p. 129.

58 Dina Feitelson, "Ḥinukh ha-Yeladim be-Gil ha-Rakh ba-Eda ha-Kurdit". (Education of Young Children in the Kurdish Community). MEGAMOT 5; p. 95-110. 1954.

59 Carl Frankenstein, SHIKUM HA-INTELIGENTSIA HA-ḤAVULA (Impaired Intelligence). Jerusalem: School of Education of the Hebrew University and the Ministry of Education and Culture, 1971. p. 58-80.

Carl Frankenstein "secondary retardation", could not be overcome by routine schooling which starts as late as five or six years of age. Close investigation also produced findings showing a positive correlation between the illiteracy and primitiveness of parents, and the poor and faulty vocabulary or weak conceptualization patterns of their children. Oriental children, regardless of being newcomers themselves or the offspring of parents from Islamic countries, lacked adequate linguistic development and the capacity for abstraction, all of which are crucial for any higher-level intellectual growth.

A large pool of statistical evidence corroborated the research findings. Since more and advanced schooling clearly facilitates upward mobility, data collection and follow-up studies concentrated on the drop-out rate during compulsory schooling. The results of the nation-wide achievement test, the Seker (Survey) held in grade eight, and the demographic characteristics of students in the post-primary and higher institutions were also studied. A selection of relevant data drawn from this research will be presented here.

According to a 1966 estimate, the ratio of Jewish children reaching the Eighth Grade were 925 per mil of those who had started in the First Grade. 60 per mil more left school in the Eighth Grade itself. Among these early leavers, the children in the urban slums and development towns and villages, inhabited predominantly by Oriental immigrants, accounted for the double of the national average.[60] The same survey calculated that the drop-out rate of Oriental children from the Sixth and Seventh Grades in 1963 was ten times the rate found in the old-established localities, settled

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60 "Early Leaving and Irregular Attendance at the Primary School" (In Hebrew; a survey conducted by the Szold Institute for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, Jerusalem), BA-HINUKH HA-YESSODI (Elementary Education) 5, Jerusalem, 1966. As cited by Kleinberger, SOCIETY, p. 161.

by a veteran population.[61]

Among those who reached the Eighth Grade and took the Seker examination, the veteran children achieved much higher scores. Even years after a different standard, "Norm B", had been introduced into the Seker for scoring the Oriental children, 39 per cent children of Western origin as against only 8.6 per cent of Oriental children scored in the upper 78-100 bracket in 1963. This is a ratio of 1:4.5. Even more significantly, this ratio proved to be a widening of the gap since 1957 (1:3).[62]

Subsequent to the above findings, fewer Oriental than Western pupils entered and finished post-primary schools. The ratio was particularly striking in the academic high schools. The more practical and short-term vocational schools showed less differentiation within their student bodies. In the school-year 1965/6, in all post-primary education, the proportion of Oriental children was 37 per cent and that accounted for only 28.6 per cent of the students in the academic programs.[63]

It has also been computed that even among students who had achieved the highest scores in the Seker examinations, only 60 per cent of the Oriental as against 73 per cent of Western students entered academic schools.[64] This data clearly indicates that achievement differences alone were not the reasons for the smaller numbers of Oriental students going on with their studies. Neither could the tuition fee system in the

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61 Ibid. p. 283.

62 Ibid. p. 286.

63 Ibid. p. 288. (Percentage rates computed by the author of this paper).

64 Leah Or, FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF THE FURTHER EDUCATION OF SEKER EXAMINEES IN 1957 (in Hebrew). Szold Foundation, Jerusalem: 1964; table 13; As cited by Kleinberger, SOCIETY, p. 289.

post-primary schools account for these differences. Success in the Seker examinations, plus an inadequate income bracket of their parents, allowed Oriental students to get a partly or completely free tuition.

The drop-out rate of Oriental students from all levels of post-primary schooling was much higher than that of their Western counterparts. On the academic level, 33 per cent of those who started the Ninth Grade were Oriental, but in the same year only 19 per cent of them constituted the population of the Twelfth or terminal grade. In vocational schools, 58 per cent who started the Ninth Grade were of Oriental origin but only 27 per cent of them were found in the Twelfth Grade. Agricultural schools fared better, with a ratio of 62 per cent in the Ninth and 43 per cent in the Twelfth Grade.[65]

In Israel the Maturity Examinations, usually taken at the age of seventeen or older, are the key to entering higher learning. The main avenue to the Maturity (Bagrut in Hebrew) Examinations are the academic high schools,[66] but there are other optional routes as well. In accordance with the other findings that already have been described, the proportion of Oriental students in the Bagrut group was low. In 1968/9, for example, only 15.3 per cent of those who passed in the total population, including Jews and Arabs of all ages, were Orientals. Among the cohort in the Jewish population that was seventeen years of age or older, their part was 3.7 per cent in 1967 and 6.1 per cent in 1971. This contrasted with 24.3 per cent and 30 per cent for Western passers in the same cohort in the same years.[67]

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65 Kleinberger, SOCIETY, p. 291.

66 Today high-level vocational schools also lead to the Bagrut.

67 MAAREKHET HA-HINUKH BE-REI HAMISSPARIM (The Educational System Reflected in Figures). Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1974, p. 28.

Subsequently, students of Oriental parentage are greatly under-represented in the higher institutions of learning. In the twenty to twenty-nine year old age group, to which the great majority of Israeli students belongs, they constituted only 1.4 per cent in 1966 and 2.4 per cent in 1971. This compared with 13.2 per cent and 14.2 per cent Western-origin students; ratios of 1:9 and 1:6 respectively.[68]

When summed up, the following situation is indicated in or can be inferred from the statistical and research findings:

1. A close correlation exists between Oriental and low-class status.

2. The educationally disadvantaged stratum consists mainly of children of Oriental parents, irrespective of whether the students were born in Israel or not.

3. Poor achievement on the Seker appears to correlate with low educational level of the father and with large-sized families.

4. Even where socio-cultural variables, such as the parent's education, occupation, family-size and place of dwelling are held constant, the difference between Western and Oriental groups, though reduced, remains extensive.

5. In the Oriental group often tradition and norm of priorities, rather than actual attainment and financial situation, determine further schooling.

6. As a result of these facts the Oriental Jewish population in Israel profits from a much smaller share of educational opportunities than do Western Jews. This creates a reality of unequal conditions for upward mobility.

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68 Ibid. p. 25.

Phase III Remedial measures. Increased awareness of these problems in the second decade of statehood resulted in the introduction of several remedial measures.

1. Schools in areas of preponderantly disadvantaged population received the status of "Schools in Need of Fostering". Those schools got special preferences. Classes in them were kept small, they received preferential grants for equipment, and their teachers were regularly guided by trained counsellors. Their syllabi and teaching methods were also adapted to foster remedial teaching.

2. Free Kindergarten education was introduced for disadvantaged children in the three to four year old age group.

3. "Fostered" schools became eligible for extended school-days and extended school-years.

4. Homogeneous grouping was introduced in the main problem subjects of English, Hebrew and Mathematics.

5. Enrichment centers were set up to prepare the scholastically upper-quarter of disadvantaged children for academic post-primary education.

6. Boarding schools were set up for the gifted among the disadvantaged students.

7. Oriental students were scored on the Seker tests according to a special norm.

8. Higher institutions conducted pre-academic courses for soldiers of Oriental origin who had passed the maturity tests, to better equip them for higher learning.

9. Qualified teachers willing to settle in "development areas" were given financial incentives.

10. Research and planning aimed at identifying and compensating the disadvantaged were promoted.

In 1966/7, 30 per cent of all Hebrew primary schools benefited from such compensatory programs.[69] Many of the fostering-programs are still in effect and seem to constitute an integral part of the general Israeli social climate. Not only the disadvantaged groups benefit from them. The idea of differentiation in content and methods has overall refreshed the educational system characterized before, to some extent, by central uniformity and rigidity. "Regular" children now also profit from the new body of educational knowledge.

As for reaching the objective of upgrading the Oriental students, some of the gaps have been narrowed. For example, between 1956/7 and 1966/7 their share in all post-primary education increased from a ratio of only 1:3 to 1:1.8, and from 1:5.8 to 1:3 in the academic high schools. In 1964/5 there were seven times more Western[70] students in academic higher institutions than Oriental students; this has changed to only five times more in 1972/3.[71] Still, such improvements are considered far from satisfactory, especially since the absolute growth of the Oriental student body greatly underrepresents this age group in the also fast growing Oriental population. Further efforts are now being made to change this scene. One, and currently the most intently pursued, is the alteration of the structure of education.

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69 Kleinberger, SOCIETY, p. 298.

70 Either the students or their parents were born in Europe or America.

71 EDUCATION AND CULTURE, p. 632.